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The George Washington University  
Movement

STATEMENT  
OF  
FACTS AND OBJECTS



District of Columbia. Citizens.

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# The George Washington University Movement

## STATEMENT OF FACTS AND OBJECTS

The Citizens' Committee of the District of Columbia, organized to further The George Washington University Movement, taking into consideration the various influences and interests throughout the country which are now working toward the establishment of a great University at the national Capital, as intended by President Washington and his associates, to meet recognized educational needs, and believing that The George Washington University, by reason of the character of its organization, its history, and its position at the national Capital, is fitted to be such a University, hereby adopt and publish the following statement of facts and objects :

### *Origin and Evolution of the University*

The George Washington University is a corporation, the origin of which dates back more than eighty-six years. It is the successor of the Columbian College of the District of Columbia, which was chartered by special act of Congress on February 9, 1821, with all the powers commonly granted to American colleges. By special act of March 3, 1873, Congress recognized the Columbian College as a University by changing its name to the Columbian University. By special act of Congress of January 23, 1904, the Columbian University was authorized, on compliance with certain formalities, to take a new name. These



formalities were complied with, and on September 1, 1904, the present name was adopted. By special act of Congress of March 3, 1905, Congress recognized The George Washington University by this name and conferred upon it additional powers of the most comprehensive nature for carrying on higher education.

*Its Unique and Comprehensive Powers*

The powers of the University are unique, and, it is believed, are sufficiently broad to cover every phase of higher education at the national Capital. While it may, under its charter, carry on undergraduate instruction directly through its departments, the charter authorizes it to apply in whole or in part the English system of carrying on undergraduate work through colleges which are educationally under its jurisdiction. Such colleges are organized by permission of the University under a special incorporating act contained in the University charter. Each of such colleges has its own trustees, faculty and financial foundation, separate and distinct from the University. All are, however, so under the jurisdiction of the University that they must conform to the standards set by it and can only present to it their candidates for degrees—all degrees being conferred the University. It may carry on graduate work directly through its special University lecturers or through its departments, or, if found desirable, through colleges under its jurisdiction, and may give the proper degrees for graduate work. All the existing University systems may thus be applied by it in carrying on its work; and by this composite plan of organization, combining the advantages of a federal and a unitary system, the work of the University is standardized and coördinated, the time of the student economized, and the institution kept at the highest point of efficiency.

In addition to its power to permit the incorporation of colleges in the District of Columbia which are educationally under its jurisdiction, the University is authorized to affiliate with itself institutions of learning outside the District, which may desire to have the benefit of University affiliation.

*Its Non-Sectarian Character*

The provision of the original charter of 1821 upon this subject was subsequently repealed, and a denominational provision was inserted. By act of Congress of January 23, 1904, the denominational requirement was repealed, and the language of the original charter re-enacted. The provision reads as follows :

“Persons of every religious denomination shall be capable of being elected Trustees ; nor shall any person, either as president, professor, tutor, or pupil, be refused admittance into the University or be denied any of the privileges, immunities or advantages thereof, for or on account of his sentiments in matters of religion.”

Immediately after this last legislation, the Board of Trustees was reorganized so that no religious denomination has a control. This action was intended to signify, and does signify, that the University holds this provision to mean that the institution is forever to be non-sectarian.

This interpretation makes the charter accord with the expressed views of the framers of the Constitution and their associates. In the Constitutional Convention, James Madison and Charles Pinckney introduced, and James Wilson seconded, a resolution authorizing Congress to establish a University, “in which no preferences or distinctions should be allowed on account of religion.” Washington, in his will, declared that he wished to see a University established in the District of Columbia, “on a liberal scale.” President Monroe, in approving

the original charter, said that it was "well digested," and that it "looks to the proper objects and grants the powers well adapted to their attainment."

Any attempt to make a sectarian institution of the University can be corrected by Congress, under its reserved power to alter or amend the charter.

The charter authorizes the establishment of a Board of Visitors, which may be representative of the interests of the country at large, and which will assure the observance of every provision of the charter.

#### *Its Colleges and Departments*

The University has, in its various Faculties, over one hundred and sixty professors and teachers. It has thirteen hundred and fifty-eight students. It gives full day instruction in all its colleges and departments. Its undergraduate work in the arts and sciences is done by Columbian College, which, though bearing the name of the original institution from which the University has sprung, is nevertheless a corporation recently organized under the provisions of the charter of the University. Besides this college, there are two other undergraduate colleges, organized under the provisions of the University charter,—a College of Engineering and a College of Pharmacy. The possibility of giving undergraduate instruction through colleges under the jurisdiction of the University, on the broadest as well as on the most specific and practical lines, is thus illustrated. The graduate work of the University is done through a Graduate Department of the Arts and Sciences, a Department of Medicine, a Department of Law and a Department of Politics and Diplomacy,

The Department of Politics and Diplomacy is being organized as a College of the Political Sciences, carrying



on undergraduate, graduate and professional instruction in American history, politics, economics, finance, international law and diplomacy.

### *Its Financial Condition*

The University owns real estate, securities and equipment, estimated at one million five hundred thousand dollars, against which there is an indebtedness of about five hundred thousand dollars. The clear assets of the University, therefore, amount to approximately one million dollars, of which two hundred thousand dollars belong to Columbian College.

The University derives its income at present almost wholly from tuition charges. Therefore, the running expenses, including the interest charges, necessarily exceed the income.

It is a remarkable fact that while in other institutions of like character the tuition fees pay on an average only fifty per cent. of the running expenses, in this institution, owing to the careful financial management and the self-sacrificing spirit of the professors and teachers, these fees pay seventy-five per cent. of these expenses, the institution at the same time maintaining as high a standard as any in the country, and doing work which receives full credit in the educational world.

### *Objects of the George Washington University Movement*

Organized on these liberal and generous lines, situated at the national Capital, established for eighty-four years on a lesser scale and for the last two years on the broader basis, The George Washington University has already begun to attract the attention of the country. The wealth of material for the use of students which already exists in Washington is increasing daily at a marvelous

rate, and graduate students are more and more finding themselves compelled to do a great part of their work in this city. A great University, free from all sectarian or partisan control, led by men of wide experience and culture, will formulate this mass of material and, by systematizing it and rendering it available for students, will make Washington the great center for graduate study; and the University will thereby become an important factor in determining, by dispassionate discussion, sound principles of political and economic action. Such a University may also be a very useful instrumentality for harmonizing and unifying educational movements. The undergraduate colleges will provide for the local needs, and will be sought by a great body of young men attracted to the national Capital, the great political and educational center.

George Washington and his associates in the Constitutional Convention realized that a great University, non-sectarian and non-partisan in character, exercising important functions in the life of the people of the whole country, organized under the power of Congress as the legislature of the District of Columbia, was a necessary and inevitable part of the national Capital. The plan of Constitution introduced in the Convention as a basis of action by Charles Pinckney, and which was used as the original draft of the Constitution, provided for a University at the seat of government, as an independent item. The Committee which reported the Constitution in its first form omitted this item, and Madison, in the Convention, moved to restore it. The Constitution was again referred to a Committee, and was reported back with this item omitted, but with the provision giving Congress exclusive power in the Federal District. Again the question was brought before the Convention by the resolution above referred to, introduced by Pinckney and Madison and seconded by Wilson, authorizing the establishment of a

non-sectarian University, and proposing to insert the provision among the specifications of the powers granted to Congress as the national legislature. Gouverneur Morris opposed the resolution, saying, "It is not necessary. The exclusive power at the seat of government will reach the object." The Convention accepted his view, thus adopting the principle that the University to be established at the national Capital should be organized by Congress as a corporation of the District of Columbia, under its powers as the legislature of the District and not under its powers as the national legislature. They feared, perhaps, lest a University wholly or principally supported by the national funds might not have that freedom of thought and action which are essential to the beneficent life and power of a University, and might, in times of political or religious excitement, be used by a political faction or a religious sect to disseminate ideas harmful to the republic. They doubtless saw also, as Washington did, that a great educational corporation, supported wholly or almost wholly by the private generosity of the people of the country, established at the seat of government, would be able to render, and would render, great and peculiar services in many ways to the people of the whole country.

Washington, in speaking of a great University of the kind intended by the Constitutional Convention, declared that "the Federal City, from its centrality and the advantages which in other respects it must have over any other place in the United States, ought to be preferred as a proper site for such a University." In that part of his will in which he made the bequest which he intended to be the beginning of an endowment of a great University in the District of Columbia, he declared that it had been his "ardent wish to see a plan devised, on a liberal scale, which would have a tendency to spread systematic ideas through all parts of this rising Empire, thereby to do

away [with] local attachments and State prejudices, as far as the nature of things would or indeed ought to admit, from our National Councils," and which would enable the youth of the whole country to associate together at the Capital and "to acquire knowledge in the principles of politics and government."

The conclusion reached by the Constitutional Convention as to the necessity of making the University at the national Capital non-sectarian and non-partisan, was also reached by Congress in 1821, as the result of the debate in both Houses upon the bill for the charter of the Columbian College. The Senate, upon the insistence of certain Senators, inserted in the charter the non-sectarian provision above quoted. In the House a strong effort was made to insert a provision making certain high officials of the National Government *ex officio* members of its Board of Trustees and of a Board of Visitors, but, after a long debate, this attempt was defeated, doubtless on the ground that such a provision would give the institution a partisan character. President Monroe, approving the charter, said (as before in part quoted):

"The act of incorporation is well digested, looks to the proper objects, and grants the powers well adapted to their attainment. \* \* \* This institution, if it receives hereafter the proper encouragement, cannot fail to be eminently useful to the Nation. Under this impression, I trust that such encouragement will not be withheld from it."

There is, therefore, a recognized need, clearly felt and pointed out by Washington and his associates in the Convention, of a great University at the national Capital, to fulfil certain great and beneficent functions in the life of the people of the whole country. It seems not too much to say that The George Washington University, existing under the Columbian College charter enlarged and broad-

ened by the additional powers since conferred by Congress, to which the revered name of Washington has been attached by the consent and with the approval of Congress, was organized to be, is fitted to be, and is destined to be that University.

Therefore, the objects of this movement are, to establish The George Washington University upon a commanding site given by the people of the District, with ample endowment furnished by the private benefactions of the people of the whole country, and thus to create the great University Washington and his associates desired to see established at the national Capital.







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